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SUBJECT: ANBARIS MEET IN AMMAN TO DRAFT A PROVINCIAL
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

REF: BAGHDAD 3801

[1](#)1. (U) This is an Anbar PRT reporting cable.

Summary

[1](#)2. (U) Some 115 Anbari notables, including government officials, civil servants, and tribal leaders, participated in an off-site conference November 14-18 sponsored by USAID contractor RTI in Amman to draft the Provincial Development Strategy (PDS), which is a long-term vision statement for future economic and social development. The PDS is a GOI requirement. The participants met in plenary sessions and in five break-out groups for governance, infrastructure, social services, agriculture, and economic development. Ten participants stayed for two extra days to work on the 52-page draft summary. The draft is expected to be presented to the districts and sub-districts for comment between December 2-10. The Provincial Council is expected to vote on the final document on December 30. The number of attendees was surprising large, and the quality of the discussions indicated that the Anbaris want to move ahead briskly on economic reconstruction. The event was covered by Arabic and English language international media. Nonetheless, the Awakening Council of Iraq (SAI), which had at least seven representatives present, boycotted the conference on grounds that it had not been consulted in the conference preparation (reftel). End Summary.

Leaders Stress Unity

[1](#)3. (U) Over 115 Anbari leaders from across the province gathered in Amman for the fourth Anbar PDS Conference on November 13-17. Members of local, provincial, and central governments attended. Approximately 20 tribal sheikhs from several parts of the province also attended. According to conference organizers, representatives from every district and sub-district of the province were present. Four of Anbar's nine representatives in the GOI Council of Representatives participated in the conference. Five women participated, three as members of the Provincial Council (PC) and two from Anbar's national parliamentary delegation.

[1](#)4. (U) Governor Ma'amoun Sami Rasheed, PC Chairman Abdulsalam Abdullah, and Anbar Tribal Council representative Sheikh Hameed Turki delivered remarks at the opening plenary on November 14. They also held a joint press conference and conducted one-on-one interviews.

[1](#)5. (U) In his opening remarks, PC Chairman Abdulsalam said Anbar will emerge from "the darkness of terrorism with the support of the central government and coalition forces." He stated that the conference's aim was to take advantage of Anbar's improved security to promote economic development. Stressing the importance of working together, Ma'amoun said:

"We are proud of coming up with this plan for progress in Anbar." Sheikh Hameed recognized the participation of at least a dozen tribal sheikhs. "Let everyone see how we all work together in harmony," Hameed said.

Conference Attracts International Media

¶16. (U) The conference drew significant Arabic and English language media, which covered the opening and closing sessions. At a press conference following the opening session, a reporter asked the PC Chairman why the Anbari leadership was meeting in Jordan if the security situation had improved. Abdulsalam responded that Anbar lacks adequate hotel space for holding such a large conference. "God willing, this will be the last conference we hold outside Anbar," he said.

Five Break-Out Groups

¶17. (U) The participants divided into five working groups for governance, infrastructure, social services, agriculture, and economic development. Each group identified challenges and objectives in its sector and presented its preliminary conclusions orally in the plenary session. RTI facilitators were on hand to guide the discussions, but in several groups, Anbaris conducted discussions themselves.

The Way Forward: Stressing Local Input

¶18. (U) The Anbari leadership appointed a drafting committee for the final report with representatives from each working

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group. The drafters stayed in Amman two additional days at the conclusion of the conference to continue drafting, working until midnight on one of those days. RTI and PRT staff was on hand to assist. At the closing session, PC Chairman Abdulsalam announced that the drafting committee would complete its work by December 2. "Some people think that this is just a conference and nothing will happen after it, but that is not the case," he said.

¶19. (U) Stressing the importance of a "bottom-up approach" that includes local input, the PC Chairman said that the PDS draft report would be sent to Anbar's districts and sub districts on December 3 for comment. The draft will also be sent to the Governor's Office and to the various directors general. The drafting committee will finalize the report, taking into account comments from the municipalities, between December 10 and 27. The PC Chairman has called a PC meeting for December 30 to vote on the document, in the hopes that the PDS for Anbar Province can be sent to the Ministry of Planning by the December 31 deadline. "I think this was a successful conference," a PC member said. Echoing a common refrain among participants, he added: "The conference was good and we made good plans. Now we have to wait to see the results."

¶10. (U) The following is a preliminary summary of some of the challenges and opportunities identified in the working groups. The draft report, however, is 52 pages in Arabic and is more detailed than the brief sketches that appear below. RTI will translate the document into English. It is not yet available.

Governance

¶11. (U) Eleven Anbari leaders - including Governor Ma'amoun Deputy Governor Othman Hummadi, and Deputy Provincial Council Chairman Khamees Abtan - participated in the Governance Committee. They identified the following shortcomings: the lack of statutory clarity between the executive and

legislative branches, and between levels of government; the lack of qualified personnel in the civil service; the lack of public awareness of provincial government activities; and the lack of a public database of legislated decisions and provincial government programs.

Infrastructure

¶12. (U) The Infrastructure Committee set out to create a five-year plan to improve basic services, re-start the K-3 oil refinery in Haditha and increase its capacity, and tap the province's presumed natural gas deposits for power generation. The rehabilitation of the railroad system was another objective. As for challenges, the committee identified local political rivalries which have been obstacles to infrastructure development; the need to strengthen the relationship between Anbar and the central government; the lack of qualified personnel in government departments; and the need to develop media and improve access to information from the provincial government.

Social Services

¶13. (U) The Social Services Committee attracted the largest number of participants, over two dozen at times, including all five women. It divided its discussion into several subsectors including: women's affairs; religious and tribal affairs; health and environment; education; civil society; and public relations. Committee members discussed the importance of protecting the province's judges, who have been targeted by terrorists in the past. They acknowledged the importance of religious leaders in "unifying society and minimizing extremist influences," while citing the importance of including tribal leadership in the province's strategic plan given the role Anbari tribes play in "achieving political and religious reconciliation." Discussing the role of tribes in Anbar, one committee member stated: "We are all proud of the tribes. We all come from the tribes." On health issues, the committee called for providing incentives to attract medical professionals, reopening training facilities, and establishing a modern research facility. On education the committee identified the importance of creating international student exchange programs. The committee also concluded that the strategic plan should encourage the development of NGOs and media outlets. It also called for the develop employment centers for widows and orphans, and an expanded role for women in government.

Agriculture

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¶14. (U) The Agriculture Committee participants represented a cross-section of agricultural leaders and subject matter experts. They address challenges and opportunities in soil and water resources, agronomy, animal husbandry, energy resources, and agri-business. Committee members discussed strategies to overcome obstacles inhibiting progress in the agriculture sector, as well as plans to "create an environment whereby farmers will be encouraged to resume their profession and prosper" given the improved security situation in Anbar. Participants also focused on the importance of providing information and other resources to farmers and the agricultural workforce to boost productivity.

Economic Development

¶15. (U) The Economic Development Committee identified the need to obtain additional capital from the GOI and financial institutions; the need for a consumer protection initiative; the development of alternative energy sources; and greater clarity in investment laws. The committee also discussed the

negative consequences of a "brain drain" from Anbar Province, noting that many educated professionals had left the province. The committee identified specific projects critical to economic development, including the re-start of the K-3 refinery in Haditha; the upgrade of the Haditha power station; the development of organic waste power stations; securing GOI funding for state-owned enterprises, and to support micro-enterprise and a women's employment program. It also recommended the development of environmental "green zones" around major cities.

SAI Boycott

¶16. (SBU) While the conference was underway, Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, the leader of the Awakening Council of Iraq, sent a letter to the PC Chairman announcing that the SAI would boycott the event on grounds it was not consulted during the planning. There were an estimated seven SAI members attending the conference. Ahmad also called for the PC Chair's ouster and announced that SAI members of the Provincial Council would suspend their activities with that body (reftel). SAI conference-goers participated sporadically, but generally stayed away from working groups.

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